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IF we give credit to the vulgar opinion, or even to the aſſertions of ſome reputable authors both ancient and modern, poor human nature was not originally formed for keeping: every age has degenerated; and from the fall of the firſt man, my unfortunate anceſtor, our ſpecies has been tumbling on, century by century, from bad to worſe, for about ſix thouſand years.

CONSIDERING this progreſſive ſtate of deterioration, it is a very great mercy that things are no worſe with us at preſent; ſince, geometrically ſpeaking, the human ought by this time to have ſunk infinitely below the brute and the vegetable ſpecies, which are neither of them ſuppoſed to have dwindled or degenerated conſiderably,

ably, except in a very few inſtances: for it muſt be owned that our modern oaks are inferior to thoſe of Dodona, our breed of horſes to that of the Centaurs, and our breed of fowls to that of the Phœnixes.

But is this really the caſe? Certainly not. It is only one of thoſe many errors, which are artfully ſcattered by the deſigns of a few, and blindly adopted by the ignorance and folly of the many. The moving exclamations of—*theſe ſad times! this degenerate age!* the affecting lamentations over *declining virtue* and *triumphant vice*, and the tender and final farewell bidden every day to unrewarded and diſcouraged public ſpirit, arts and ſciences, are the common-place topics of the pride, the envy and the malignity of the human heart, that can more eaſily forgive, and even commend, antiquated and remote, than bear cotemporary and contiguous merit. Men of theſe mean ſentiments have always been the ſatyriſts of their own, and the panegyriſts of former times. They give this tone, which fools, like birds in the dark, catch by ear, and whiſtle all day long.

As it has conſtantly been my endeavour to root out, if I could, or if I could not, to expoſe the vices of the human heart, it ſhall be the object of this day's paper to examine this ſtrange inverted entail of virtue and merit upwards, according to priority of birth, and ſeniority of age. I ſhall prove it to be forged, and conſequently null and void to all intents and purpoſes whatſoever.

If I loved to jingle, I would ſay that human nature has always been invariably the ſame, though always varying; that is, the ſame in ſubſtance, but varying in forms and modes, from many concurrent cauſes, of which perhaps we know but few. Climate, education, accidents, ſeverally contribute to change thoſe modes; but in all climates, and in all ages, we diſcover through them, the ſame paſſions, affections and appetites, and the ſame degree of virtues and vices.

This being unqueſtionably the true ſtate of the caſe, which it would be endleſs to bring inſtances to prove from the hiſtories of all times and of all nations, I ſhall by way of warning to the incautious, and of reproof to the deſigning,

deſigning, proceed to explain the reaſons, which I have but juſt hinted at above, why the human nature of the time being, has always been reckoned the worſt and moſt degenerate.

AUTHORS, eſpecially poets, though great men, are, alas! but men; and like other men, ſubject to the weakneſſes of human nature, though perhaps in a leſs degree: but it is however certain that their breaſts are not abſolutely ſtrangers to the paſſions of jealouſy, pride and envy. Hence it is that they are very apt to meaſure merit by the century, to love dead authors better than living ones, and to love them the better, the longer they have been dead. The Auguſtan age is therefore their favourite æra, being at leaſt ſeventeen hundred years diſtant from the preſent. That emperor was not only a judge of wit, but, for an emperor, a tolerable performer too; and Mæcenas, his firſt miniſter, was both a patron and a poet: he not only encouraged and protected, but fed and fattened men of wit at his own table, as appears from Horace: no ſmall encouragement for panegyric. Thoſe were times indeed for genius to diſplay itſelf in! It was honoured, taſted and rewarded. But now—*O tempora! O mores!* One muſt however do juſtice to the authors, who thus declaim againſt their own times, by acknowledging that they are ſeldom the aggreſſors; their own times having commonly begun with Them. It is their reſentment, not their judgment (if they have any) that ſpeaks this language. Anger and deſpair make them endeavour to lower that merit, which till brought very low indeed, they are conſcious they cannot equal.

THERE is another, and much more numerous ſet of much greater men, who ſtill more loudly complain of the ignorance, the corruption and the degeneracy of the preſent age. Theſe are the conſummate volunteer, but unregarded and unrewarded politicians, whoat a modeſt computation amount to at leaſt three millions of ſouls in this political country, and who are all of them both able and willing to ſteer the great veſſel of the ſtate, and to take upon themſelves the whole load of buſineſs, and burthen of *employments*, for the ſervice of their dear country. The adminiſtration for the time being is always the worſt, the moſt incapable, the moſt corrupt, that

that ever was, and negligent of every thing but their own intereſt. *Where are now your Cecils and your Walſinghams?* Thoſe who aſk that queſtion could anſwer it, if they would ſpeak out. *Themſelves.* For they are all that, and more too.

I STEPT the other day, in order only to inquire how my poor country did, into a coffee-houſe, that is without diſpute the ſeat of the ſoundeſt politics in this great metropolis, and ſate myſelf down within ear-ſhot of the principal council table. Fortunately for me, the preſident, a perſon of age, dignity and becoming gravity, had juſt begun to ſpeak. He ſtated with infinite perſpicuity and knowledge the preſent ſtate of affairs in other countries, and the lamentable ſituation of our own. He traced with his finger upon the table, by the help of ſome coffee which he had ſpilt in the warmth of his exordium, the whole courſe of the Ohio, and the boundaries of the Ruſſian, Pruſſian, Auſtrian and Saxon dominions; foreſaw a long and bloody war upon the continent, calculated the ſupplies neceſſary for carrying it on, and pointed out the beſt methods of raiſing them, which, for that very reaſon, he intimated would not be purſued. He wound up his diſcourſe with a moſt pathetic peroration, which he concluded with ſaying, *Things were not carried on in this way in queen Elizabeth's days; the public was conſidered, and able men were conſulted and employed. Thoſe were days!* "Aye, ſir, and nights too, I preſume (ſaid "a young fellow who ſtood near him) ſome longer and "ſome ſhorter, according to the variation of the ſeaſons; "pretty much like ours." Mr. Preſident was a little ſurprized at the ſuddenneſs and pertneſs of this interruption, but recompoſing himſelf, anſwered with that cool contempt that becomes a great man, "I did not mean "aſtronomical days, but political ones." The young fellow replied, "O then, ſir, I am your ſervant," and went off in a laugh.

THUS informed and edified, I went off too, but could not help reflecting in my way, upon the ſingular ill-luck of this my dear country, which as long as ever I remember it, and as far back as I have read, has always been governed by the only two or three people, out of two or three millions, totally incapable of governing, and

and unfit to be truſted. But theſe reflections were ſoon interrupted by numbers of people, whom I obſerved crowding into a public houſe. Among them I diſcovered my worthy friend and taylor, that induſtrious mechanic, Mr. Regnier. I applied to him to know the meaning of that concourſe; to which, with his uſual humanity, he anſwered, "We are the maſter taylors, "who are to meet to-night to conſider what is to be "done about our journeymen, who inſult and impoſe "upon us, to the great detriment of trade." I aſked him whether under his protection I might ſlip in and hear their deliberations. He ſaid yes, and welcome; for that they ſhould do nothing to be aſhamed of. I profited of this permiſſion, and following him into the room, found a conſiderable number of theſe ingenious artiſts aſſembled, and waiting only for the arrival of my friend, who it ſeems was too conſiderable for buſineſs to begin without him. He accordingly took the lead, opened the meeting with a very handſome ſpeech, in which he gave many inſtances of the inſolence, the unreaſonableneſs, and the exorbitant demands of the journeymen taylors, and concluded with obſerving, "that if the government "minded any thing now-a-days but themſelves, ſuch "abuſes would not have been ſuffered; and had they "been but attempted in queen Elizabeth's days, ſhe "would have *worked* them with a witneſs." Another orator then roſe up to ſpeak; but as I was ſure that he could ſay nothing better than what had juſt fallen from my worthy friend, I ſtole off unobſerved, and was purſuing my way home, when in the very next ſtreet I diſcovered a much greater number of people (though by their dreſs of ſeemingly inferior note) ruſhing into another public houſe. As numbers always excite my curioſity, almoſt as much as they mutually do each other's paſſions, I crowded in with them, in order to diſcover the object of this meeting, not without ſome ſuſpicion that this frequent ſenate might be compoſed of the journeymen taylors, and convened in oppoſition to that which I had juſt left. My ſuſpicion was ſoon confirmed by the eloquence of a journeyman, a finiſher I preſume, who expatiated with equal warmth and dignity, upon the injuſtice and oppreſſion of the maſter taylors, to the utter ruin of thouſands of poor journeymen and their families; and concluded with aſſerting, "it was a ſhame

"that